

Healthy Homes Initiative

CITY OF LONG BEACH
Department of Health
and Human Services
Bureau of Environmental Health



Introduction to Asthma

✱ What is asthma?

✱ Who is most at risk to get asthma?

✱ What does the indoor environment have to do with asthma?

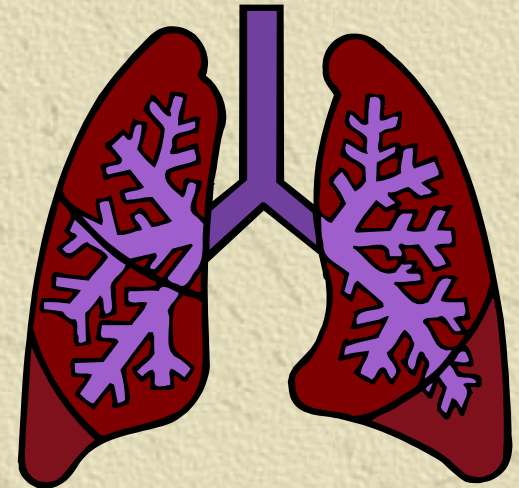
✱ How can you reduce exposure to indoor asthma triggers?



What Is **Asthma** ?

Asthma *is:*

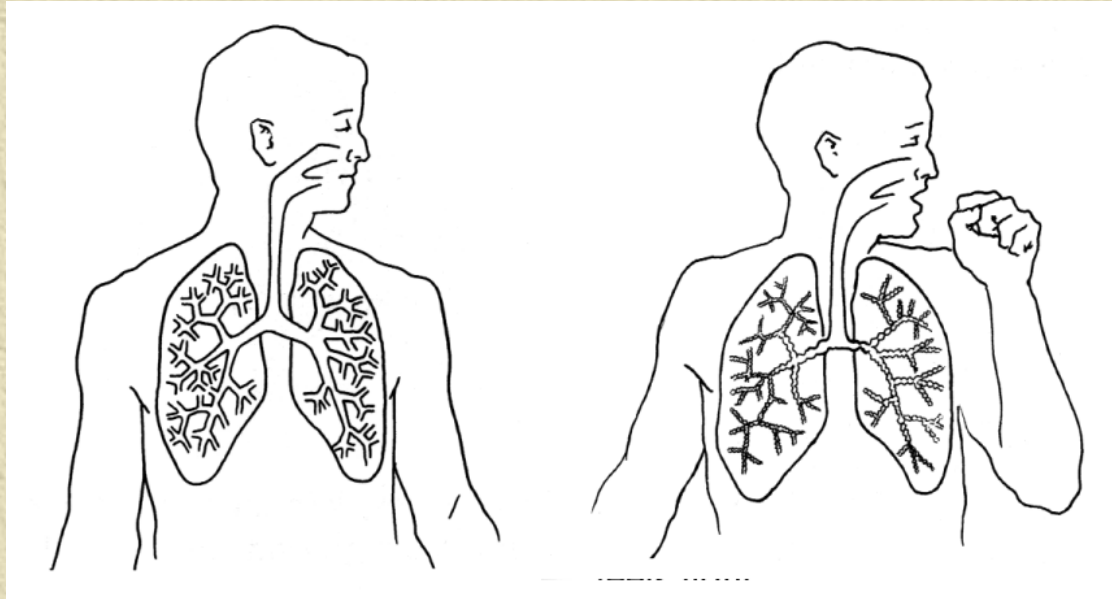
- ✦ **A chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways**
- ✦ **Usually reversible, but not yet curable**
- ✦ **Not the same as allergies**
- ✦ **Not contagious**



What Happens

During an asthma episode ?

Airways narrow. This is caused by:



- **Tightening of the muscles that surround the airways**
- **Swelling of the inner lining, and/or**
- **Increase in mucus production**

Asthma **SYMPTOMS**



Coughing



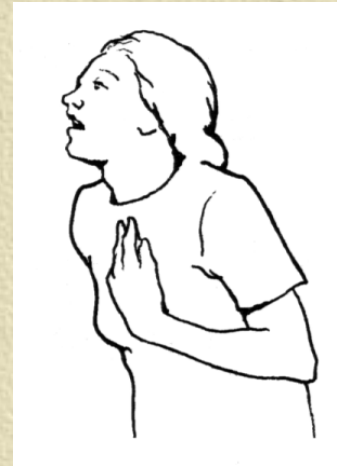
Wheezing



**Chest
tightness**



**Shortness of
breath**



most at risk

Who is to suffer from asthma?



Children



Low-income, urban residents



Some minorities



Allergic individuals



People with a hereditary disposition for asthma

Managing Asthma

Consult with your physician to develop an asthma management plan, including:



- ◆ **Appropriate medication**
- ◆ **Identification of your asthma triggers and ways to reduce or avoid exposure to your asthma triggers**
- ◆ **Peak flow monitoring**
- ◆ **Emergency plan**

Common

asthma Triggers



Allergens

- ◆ *animal dander (tiny scales of animal skin), cockroaches, dust mites (tiny bugs that use house dust as food), molds, pollens, foods*



Irritants

- ◆ Aerosols, smog, *secondhand smoke*, strong odors



Other

- ◆ Changes in weather (cold air, wind, humidity)
- ◆ Endocrine factors (menstrual period, pregnancy, thyroid disease)
- ◆ Excessive exercise
- ◆ Medication
- ◆ Viral respiratory infections

* *The 5 major indoor asthma triggers*

What does the

Indoor Environment

have to do with

Asthma?

-
- ✦ **People spend about 90% of their time indoors**
 - ✦ **All of the common asthma triggers are found indoors**
 - ✦ **Reducing exposure to indoor allergens and irritants can reduce asthma symptoms**
 - ✦ **Prevention is an important asthma management tool**

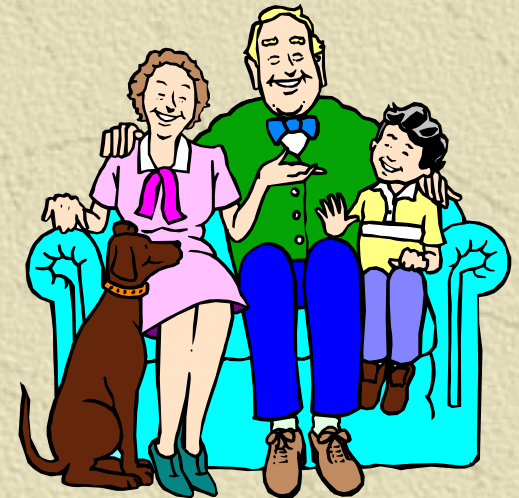
Most common Indoor

Environmental Triggers

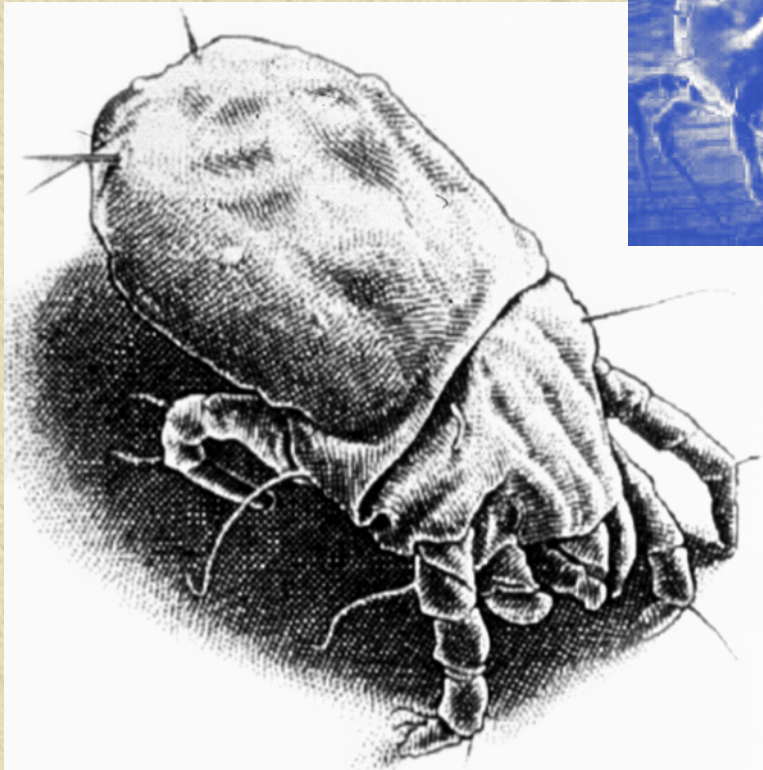


Secondhand Smoke

- ✦ Is particularly harmful to young children
- ✦ Contains more than 4,000 toxic substances (over 40 are carcinogenic)
- ✦ Can trigger asthma attacks and cause young children who do not already have asthma to develop asthma
- ✦ Choose not to smoke in your home or car and do not allow others to do so either



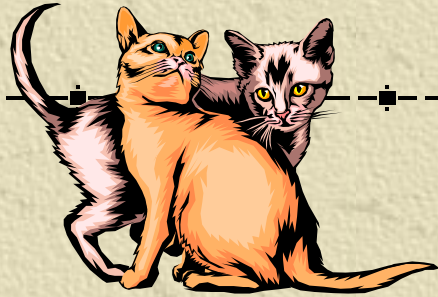
DUST mites



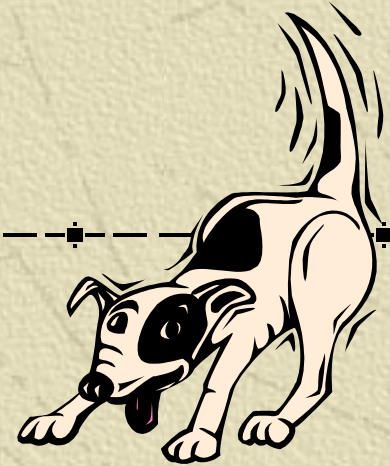
- ✦ Mites and mite droppings can be asthma triggers
- ✦ Can cause children to develop asthma
- ✦ Are found in most homes
- ✦ Live in soft bedding
- ✦ Feed on skin flakes

Avoiding **dust mite** **Triggers**

- ✱ **Wash sheets and blankets in hot water, once a week**
- ✱ **Choose washable stuffed animals, wash them often in hot water, and dry thoroughly -- keep stuffed animals off beds**
- ✱ **Cover mattresses and pillows in dust-proof (allergen-impermeable) zippered covers**
- ✱ **Vacuum often when the person with asthma is not present**
- ✱ **Maintain low indoor humidity**



PeTs



- ✦ Skin flakes (dander), urine, and saliva of warm blooded animals can be asthma triggers
- ✦ Triggers can remain in the home for several months after a pet is removed, even with cleaning



Avoiding

pet

Triggers

✦ **Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture, carpets and stuffed animals**

✦ **Keep pets out of the bedroom and other sleeping areas at all times and keep the bedroom door closed**

✦ **Consider keeping pets outdoors or even finding a new home for your pets, if necessary**

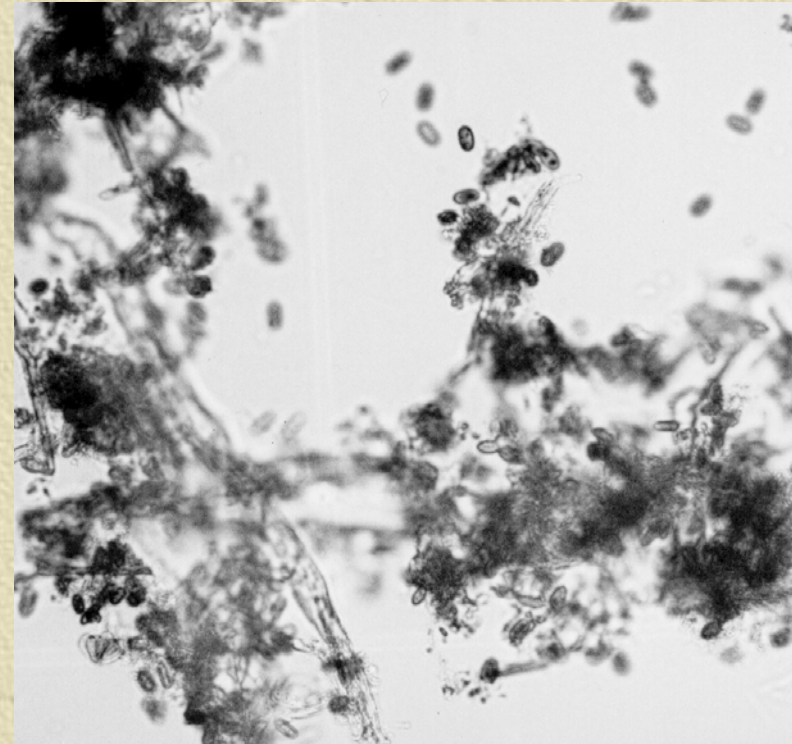
✦ **If you remove an animal from the home, clean thoroughly afterwards**

Molds

✦ Can be found almost anywhere and can grow on any damp substance

✦ Can be controlled by reducing sources of moisture*

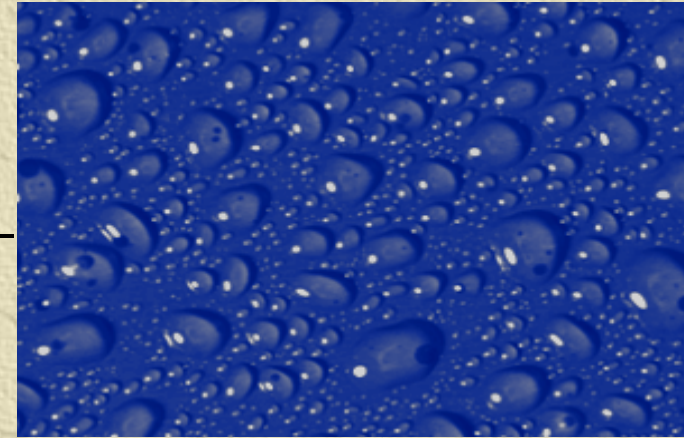
✦ Can be eliminated by washing mold off hard surfaces and drying the surface completely



**Reducing moisture also helps to reduce other asthma triggers, such as dust mites and cockroaches*

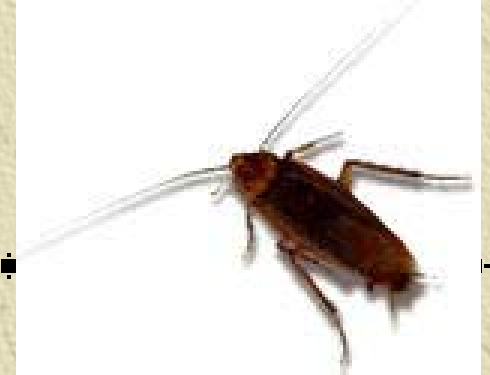
Avoiding

Mold Triggers



- ✦ Keep drip pans in your air conditioner, refrigerator, and dehumidifier clean and dry
- ✦ Replace absorbent materials (ceiling tiles and carpet) if necessary
- ✦ Maintain low indoor humidity
- ✦ Use exhaust fans or open the windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking, or using the dishwasher
- ✦ Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water
- ✦ Vent clothes dryers to the outside

Cockroaches



- ✦ **Droppings or body parts of cockroaches can be asthma triggers**
- ✦ **Control cockroaches by eliminating places in your home for pests to hide and sources of food and water**
 - ✓ **Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids right away**
 - ✓ **Store food immediately and in airtight containers**
 - ✓ **Make sure trash and garbage cans are tightly covered**



Avoiding

Cockroaches



✦ Try using Combat roach killing gel, boric acid, or traps before using pesticide sprays

✦ If sprays are used:

- ✓ Limit the spray to infested area
- ✓ Carefully follow instructions on the label
- ✓ Make sure there is plenty of fresh air when you spray, and keep the person with asthma out of the room

